



Mystics and Misfits: Meeting God Through St. Francis and Other Unlikely Saints

Christiana N. Peterson

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“A lively memoir mixed with short biographies of appealing religious outcasts.” —PUBLISHERS WEEKLYWith untested ideals and a thirst for adventure, Christiana Peterson and her family moved to an intentional Christian farming community in the rural Midwest. It sounded like a simple and faithful way to follow Jesus, not to mention a great place to raise kids. In *Mystics and Misfits*, Peterson discovers that community life is never really simple and that she needs resources beyond her own to weather the anxiety and exhaustion of trying to save a dying farm and a floundering congregation. She turns to Christian mystics like Francis of Assisi, Simone Weil, and Dorothy Day to find sustenance for the everyday struggles and unique hardships of community life. With a contemplative’s spirit and poet’s eye, Peterson leads readers into an encounter with the God of the wild mystics and the weird misfits.

Mystics and Misfits: Meeting God Through St. Francis and Other Unlikely Saints Details

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Author : Christiana N. Peterson

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From Reader Review *Mystics and Misfits: Meeting God Through St. Francis and Other Unlikely Saints* for online ebook

Karin says

Memoir with beautiful longings for faith and truth ... loved the interactions with the saints.

Michelle says

First, I will explain my star rating system for books. A 1 is a book that I don't finish. 2 is one that I finish but wish I hadn't. A 3 is an ok book. A 4 is a book that I would recommend to others. And a 5 is a book that I would re-read. Very few books are ones that I would re-read.

I give Peterson's book a 5 because the phrases are so beautifully crafted, and the call to examine our own lives through the lives of the mystics is one that I want to and plan to revisit at various times in my own spiritual journey.

Peterson's memoir shares her personal experience of living in intentional Christian community, farming, motherhood, grief, and mental health with beautifully crafted phrases and images.

Some of my favorites are:

"Longing seems to be an active, unarticulated sort of restlessness. Maybe melancholy is the gloominess of a long-term unfulfilled longing."

"The daily discipline of loving my neighbor is often ugly and painful. In larger churches, people don't have to face these unpleasant people every day. Once we are home, we take the memory of them off as we shed our Sunday dress. But intentionally nurturing neighborly love means recognizing that this love cannot be taken off."

"Mystics from other religions have much in common with the Christian mystics: they all long for unity with whatever they call God, for a union with the divine. But what distinguishes Christian mystics is the incarnation of Christ. Christian mystics long to be in union with the God who made himself small, who came to suffer alongside his creation, who descended and entered into our world, and who called us to join him in that truly baffling kind of love."

Annie Rim says

I don't often say this about a memoir, but when I finished *Mystics and Misfits*, I wanted to go for a walk with Christiana Peterson to get to know her more. Peterson has a gift for letting the story rest - she draws the reader into the journey but there are no neat bows at the end. She lives in the tension of being on a journey and she invites her reader generously into that space. I'd highly recommend this book to anyone on the journey of life, spirituality, and mystery.

Bonnie says

When I began reading the material about St. Francis, I felt like Christiana was spot on. She took what I have read about St. Francis to a whole new level with a much greater depth of intrigue bringing thoughts to current living in intentional community. Christiana's thoughts about ministry and intentional community gripped me from the first page to the last. I confess that I internalized her stories and compared them to my own. The early years with small children and the challenges of community hit home for me. Christiana has written this material beautifully.

Nichole says

I must start off with an apology because there are no words to clearly share how incredibly special this book was to me and how fantastically written it is. I needed this book. Thank you, Christiana Peterson, for writing *Mystics and Misfits*.

When I first read the synopsis for *Mystics and Misfits*, I was immediately intrigued. But beyond back cover overviews and enticing cover art, this book seemed to come to me at a time when I really needed it. I've been looking for that "more" and "deeper" in my spiritual life. I know that I am not alone.

Mystics and Misfits is a beautifully and honestly written memoir of Christiana Peterson's experiences in an intentional Mennonite community. She is a mother, a wife, a sister, a daughter, a friend – reaching beyond typical relationships of community and looking towards the closeness and understanding of the misfits (saints). Incredibly, Christiana's conversations with the saints are both encouraging and inspiring. Perhaps, these conversations are even a bit of a "like goal" for myself.

Maybe many of us want to reach out to the saints – to find understanding, peace, kinship. Shouldn't we try? After reading *Mystics and Misfits*, more than ever, I'm inclined to try.

Pages of stories of her own personal life (struggles and triumphs), anecdotes of the lives of saints, her own personal journey of spiritual discovery, and so many letters to her misfit friends (the saints) – this book is unlike anything I have ever read. It is heartfelt, it is thoughtful and it is so moving.

Mystics and Misfits is wildly special and belongs in my top five all-time favorite books.

I gave *Mystics and Misfits* 5/5 stars!

Thank you Netgalley and Herald Press for a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

Stina says

Powerful writing on saints, faith, motherhood, and the difficulty of intentional community.

Jessica says

I was expecting more history of mystics, and instead got a kind of memoir/autobiography of a portion of the author's life interspersed with snippets of info about some of the biggest names in Christian mysticism.

Deb Holloway says

I've been aware of this author's writing for a while now through her blog, some of her articles, etc., so I'm already aware of her talents as a writer. As I started reading the book, I wondered if the unusual format of first telling a story from the life of St. Francis or another saint, then follow that narrative with one of the author's own stories, and then ending that section with a letter to the saint would continue to work, and it did! All the way through the format worked, and I looked forward to seeing how the sections would fit together! Congratulations to the author, the editor, or both on that accomplishment!

I also appreciate the honesty the author uses in telling her story. Such storytelling from real life is what we the readers want, to know that another has made it through such experiences, with God's help, too, or to learn that God can use various ways to reveal himself to us.

Tim Otto says

For those of us who pursue distraction, Peterson's book is a gentle call to face the difficulty of the real. Her book invites us to a conversation between her and her crew of Mystics and Misfits as she goes through a period of loss, trouble, and failure. Peterson perseveres, and she does, her difficult curriculum leads us with her into a graced communion with the Christ.

Joy Matteson says

So glad I read this one. A beautiful, vulnerable, difficult memoir about living in community when it's good, hard, and filled with joy and suffering. Gorgeous writing. I will read anything this woman writes!

Keith Beasley-Topliffe says

In this memoir, Christiana N Peterson weaves together three main narrative strands. The first is the story of her family's move to an intentional farming community (Mennonite inspired) and their life there. The second follows her coping with the deaths of her grandmother, her father, and several members of her community. The third is about her growing acquaintance with the stories/writings of several saints, especially Francis and Claire of Assisi, Dorothy Day, Margery Kempe, and Simone Weil and how that acquaintance guided her in the other two strands. This third strand comes mainly in the form of biographical "interludes" and short "letters" to the saints. The focus is on the saints as role models of simplicity, faithfulness, devotion, etc., here

on earth rather than as intercessors in heaven -- a way for Protestants to relate to them. It all works amazingly well, especially when read in small chunks with time for reflection in the meantime. (It was my midday devotional book for 30 days.)
